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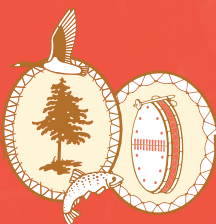
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Photo by  
Sherry Brunet





**P**erusing the comments and statements on Facebook and other social media sites is always interesting, informative and often disturbing. Disturbing in the way that some posts are vague and while without any real substance can create stereotypes. These stereotypes then tar several people and not all of them may deserve the label.

One such example is the idea that politicians who attended residential schools were traumatized by the experience. These victims then become bullies and in turn use their power to abuse the other members of the community. No specifics are given and no valid arguments or proof to make such a connection are included. First, to make a valid argument you must be able to tie in an action to what would cause that action to happen. Speculation is not necessarily a reflection of reality, but these comments are opinion without basis.

Not all Cree politicians are bullies or abusers and it is unfair to label them all as such. How can they respond because they have only been stereotyped? To respond angrily at the unfairness of it would only reinforce the label imposed upon them. It must be understood that every culture, race, society, organization or business often have bullies or abusers in positions of power. And yes, there are some in the Cree Nation. They are not limited to politicians who went to residential schools but as elsewhere in the world come from all walks of life.

To create such a negative stereotype diminishes what has been accom-

It must be understood that every culture, race, society, organization or business often have bullies or abusers in **positions of power**

plished. It denies the validity of healing by those who attended the residential school system. It ignores the resilience shown by the Cree Nation as a whole, who have had to deal with the effects of colonialism and systematic racism. The Cree culture, values and traditions that have survived to this day have done so despite the attempts to destroy them. The fact that the Cree have not been assimilated shows the strength and hard work carried out by all Cree including the survivors.

In addition, while this use of social media is being used to attack the older generation of politicians, what about the younger leaders? After all, much has been made of the intergenerational impacts that affect the children of residential school survivors. Thus, it will be easy in the future to continue tarring any First Nations leader with the residential school survivor bully or abuser stereotype.

Despite an extensive search, the Nation couldn't find any studies that examined Indigenous politicians who attended residential schools and the effects of that experience upon their leadership styles or action.

However, in 2017, a study titled Residential schools and the effects on

Indigenous health and well-being in Canada: a scoping review examined 61 articles on residential schools and its effects on Indigenous people. One of the statements reads, "while the studies reveal negative effects in relation to the residential school system, this cannot be said for everyone who attended."

That statement contradicts the sweeping assertion that Indigenous politicians who attended residential school are bullies or abusers as a result of their experiences.

In any case there is no way to know, as the vagueness of such posts make it impossible to examine and analyze the truth of the matter. It is easy to post anything you want and indeed freedom of expression is an important cornerstone of a healthy society. Cree on social media who make these types of posts need to do more than just reflect the actions used by political trolls of Canadian and US society. Many of you talk about Cree traditions and culture. Ask your Elders about what you are doing and get their advice. Maybe we'll see a way of integrating the new with the old in a uniquely Cree way.

Photo by Sgt. Johanie Maheu, Rideau Hall



by André Simoneau

## Decorated justice Donald Nicholls recognized by Governor General in Quebec City

**D**onald Nicholls is no stranger to distinction.

In addition to holding three Bachelors and a Masters degree in the fields of economics and law, he also attended the Harvard Business School for Advanced Management Program, received a Cree Nation Achievement Foundation Award in 2012 for advanced scholarship, a Canadian Institute of Conflict Resolution (CICR) Award of Merit in 2013 for his work in the area of mediation and conflict resolution with vulnerable populations, and the CICR Batsinduka Award for Peace in 2017 for his commitment to building the capacity of his people to peacefully resolve conflict through a customized third-party neutral (TPN) program.

Now he can add a new distinction to that list. On July 6, Governor General Julie Payette presented Nicholls with a Meritorious Service Decoration (MSD) by for his innovative work in youth crime prevention during a ceremony in Quebec City.

The MSD is one of the highest distinctions an individual can receive in Canada. The civilian division of the program recognizes individuals who have performed an exceptional deed or activity in any field that sets an example for others to follow, or improves the quality of life in a community, from advocacy initiatives and health-care services to research and humanitarian efforts. The civilian decorations were created in 1991 as the counterpart to the MSD (Military Division), which were established in 1984.

"Obviously you feel very honoured that the Governor General recognizes

you," Nicholls told the Nation. "But it also helps shine a spotlight on the work that we've done, what we've accomplished, and the difference that we've made in building a justice system that doesn't exist elsewhere."

Nicholls is a member of the Cree Nation of Mistissini, where he worked for the executive office of the Grand Chief and Deputy Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees, and served as the first Coordinator of Justice for the Cree Nation Government (CNG). He is currently the director of the CNG Department of Justice and Correctional Services (DOJCS).

"I think this recognition is a reflection of a lot of hard work to put in place a system that makes a difference, and that we're going to continue to build upon," he added.

While serving as director of the DOJCS, Nicholls has led the development of innovative crime prevention, alternative dispute resolution and reintegration programs for members of Eeyou Istchee. Their programs include school-based youth workshops, women's shelters and a criminal record suspension framework to help people with barriers to employment find jobs.

"We're providing a lot of services that didn't exist before," Nicholls said. "We work in the schools, we do a lot of programs with youth; we sponsor youth brigades, wellness walks, and an alternative suspension program. We work in the courts, with victims, and we offer support services that never existed before. We also do a lot of diversions from other justice committees, taking cases away from the

courts for local dispute resolution. And ultimately, we'd love to have a Cree court."

Nicholls speaks highly of the work put in by his staff and colleagues at the DOJCS and elsewhere, and of the considerable influence that Cree traditions and values have on his department's policies.

"Justice comes from the community itself. So it's based on the community's values, and the way Cree society works. We're the only ones with round courtrooms, and that's symbolic because justice is about inclusiveness. It's about the whole community being involved, and not having issues trapped in a corner."

In addition to his academic and CNG work, Nicholls has also worked with Indigenous groups from every continent, and worked with international bodies to establish better guidelines in working with Indigenous populations. He was present at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, and General Assembly in New York at the passing of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"Hopefully this recognition inspires other people to make transformative changes in the way that justice is handled within their own nations," Nicholls emphasized. "We've developed a system that's unique to us, but as a model it's transposable. And we're willing to share. Every time we've developed a program, when other First Nations tell us they're starting a similar program, we tell them, 'If you want us to help you, we're more than happy to do that.'"

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Questions?: Contact your local Eeyou Planning Commission Commissioner or the Eeyou Marine Region at 819-895-2202

## Mines and communities work together to fight forest fires during hot and dry July

Quebec mining companies played a vital part in communicating with First Nations communities and hosting firefighters from elsewhere in Canada and the United States during July as 400 firefighters were flown in to help contain forest fires resulting from lightning strikes during an unusually dry spring and summer.

By July 22, 452 fires had been recorded in Quebec this year, compared to an average of 307 by the same time of year during the past decade. Almost 30,000 hectares have been burned according to the Société de protection des forêts contre le feu (SOPFEU).

While 16 fires were active as of press time, much of Quebec's forest regions were ranked as being in extreme danger as hot, dry weather continued into late July.

"Nature started the fire and nature controlled it," said Matt Manson, CEO of Stornoway Corporation. Stornoway decided to close their mine due to two fires south and southeast of the mine started by storm fronts encroaching towards the airstrip 11 kilometres from the mine and 200 metres from the service road.

"The wind was blowing from south to north so [on July 1] we took the decision as the loss of the airport and road would otherwise strand several hundred people. We moved everybody out leaving a skeleton crew of 38 people," Manson explained.

The mine reopened three days later after 22 millimetres of rain fell. "By Wednesday we moved back in. It was a health-and-safety decision. We have an underground mine with ventilation so we had also the risk of blowing smoke. We lost three days of production but it provided a good test of our Emergency Response Plan and structure and we also used helicopters to put water on the hotspots," continued Manson.

Wildfires in the north are "part of life," said Manson. But he underlined that his company "did a good job" in its

# Taming the wildfire

by Felix von Geyer

stakeholder relations, both with First Nations neighbours and employees in communicating what was happening through the company's Facebook page. The efforts received appreciative comments for the timeliness and reliability of the information.

"It was a victory in terms of not paying lip service to health and safety and we impacted on the communities the broader values of the company to our neighbours who want commercial developers to show stewardship," concluded Manson.

Forest fires are treated under two categories in Quebec. Category 1 fires on lands which usually occur on the Southern surface below the 50th parallel and contains more vegetation and Category 2 fires that occur on the Northern surface above the 50th which is the effective treeline, Leroy Blacksmith, Regional Fire Marshall for Eeyou Istchee, told the Nation. "SOPFEU looks after Category 2 fires but only when they start to close in on First Nations or the mines," he explained.

Blacksmith noted that less precipitation this year is making conditions more dangerous. "Last year, the water levels were much higher and the land was damp," he said. "This year the lakes and waters are pretty dried up."

Osisko Mining's Windfall Lake gold project fell prey to one of the biggest fires about 40 kilometres from its facilities, located 200 kilometres northeast of Val-d'Or. It required 100 firefighters to contain the outbreak. "It came from a lightning storm. We'd had no rain since spring," said Alix Drapack, Osisko's Vice-President of Sustainable Development.

The company accommodated 80 firefighters at its project site to enable them to fight Fire 368, which comprised almost 10,000 hectares. With 60 First Nations employees on their site, the company was also in frequent contact with Waswanipi Chief Marcel Happyjack, according to Drapack.

GoldCorp affirmed that the fires allowed the company the opportunity to validate that its procedures were well executed, said Communications Manager Julie LaChapelle.

From a First Nations perspective, mitigating impacts after the fires is comparatively straightforward.

Firstly, the Cree Trappers Association covers the loss of any cabins from fire occurring on reserve chalk lines, said Eli Moore from the Grand Cree Council's Department of Commerce and Industry while harvesting agreements between First Nations and forestry companies

to recover burnt wood have been in place since 2002.

"Crees view forest fires as an opportunity for new growth," said the Cree Grand Council Director of Environment and Remedial Works, Isaac Voyageur.

"The species come back – first the woodpecker harvesting bugs embedded in the tree; the land rejuvenates, then an abundance of blueberries, other berries and then the moose," Voyageur explained.

Prior to the 2002 New Relationship Agreement with Quebec, forestry companies took all the burned wood.

Under the agreement, forestry companies can use only a maximum of 70% of the burned wood following a wildfire. The Quebec government provides satellite images of the parameters of the fire and the Cree and the companies agree what is to be harvested.

Voyageur was keen to stress that, under the agreement, the burned wood was not an additional quota or windfall for the companies. They need to deduct the tonnage of wood from companies' annual greenwood quota.

*"The species come back – first the woodpecker harvesting bugs embedded in the tree; the land rejuvenates"*

— Cree Grand Council Director of Environment and Remedial Works, Isaac Voyageur

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## Election Season

### Pash to lead CSB



The Crees elected a new chairperson of the Cree School Board July 25. Sarah Pash, until now the executive director of the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute, will be taking over as chair after defeating incumbent Kathleen Wootton and third-place finisher Robert Auclair. Pash received 2189 votes (69%), with Wootton garnering 594 votes (19%) and Auclair 384 (12%).

Pash will now serve a three-year term as Chairperson of the CSB.

### Mistissini

A run-off election for Chief was held in Mistissini July 24 after the first ballot did not produce a clear winner. Mistissini's new chief will be Thomas Neeposh, who won with 732 votes (52.32%) over incumbent Richard Shecapio, who received 667 votes (47.68%).

### Assembly of First Nations (AFN)

After two ballots at the AFN Annual General Assembly, the voting chiefs and proxies have re-elected Perry Bellegarde as National Chief. Bellegarde received 328 (62.83%) of 522 votes cast. His closest opponent, Sheila North, received 125 votes (23.94%), while Miles Richardson received 59 (11.3%) and Russell Diabo received 10 (1.9%).

### Air Fairness

To promote air travel by residents of outlying regions and stimulate the volume of airline services in those regions, Quebec Transport Minister Véronique Tremblay announced an Airfare Reduction Program on July 20.

Under the program, residents of Whapmagoostui will be eligible for a 60% reimbursement on flights – to a maximum of \$3000 a year – as their community is not accessible by road. The communi-

ties of Eeyou Istchee will be eligible for a 40% rebate on air travel up to \$1500 yearly.

The program is not available for travel that's reimbursed by an employer. Applications to access the fund must be submitted no later than one year after the flight. The reimbursement request can be submitted online.

For more info go to: [reductiontarifaeriens.transports.gouv.qc.ca/Accueil.aspx?lang=en](http://reductiontarifaeriens.transports.gouv.qc.ca/Accueil.aspx?lang=en)

### Justice for the families

The families of Colten Boushie and Jon Styres were invited to this year's Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly to call for systemic changes to Canada's legal system. Both Boshie and Styres were Indigenous men gunned down by white men who received not guilty verdicts in their criminal trials.

On July 26, the two families delivered a powerful and emotional message to the assembly. They called on Indigenous leaders to be present in courtrooms supporting families, and wanted to see action taken by the leadership to prevent violent deaths of Indigenous people from continuing. They also pleaded for the reform of every stage of the criminal justice process.



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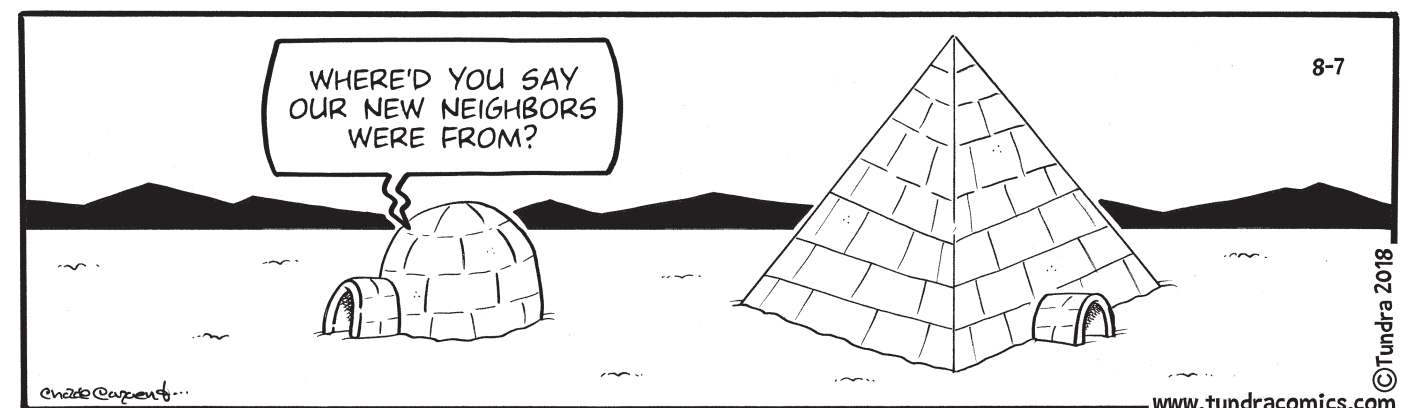
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*In 1668, the  
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into what is now  
the Rupert River*

The community celebrates  
its existence with a **year-long  
series of events**

by Ndiamon | Photos by Ian Diamond & Ndiamon

# 350 WASKAGANISH (Tree Fideeh)



One theory says that the English sailor and explorer Henry Hudson wintered near Waskaganish in 1610. While there, he encountered a Cree gentleman and traded an axe, a mirror and other items for the man's furs. The man promised he would return with more pelts but was never seen or heard from again.

The following spring, Henry Hudson was also never seen or heard from again. His mutinous crew made it back to England with stories of battles with the Inuit around Ungava Bay. Apparently, all they received was a slap on the wrist as punishment.

Almost 70 years later, in 1668, the Nonsuch sailed into what is now the Rupert River. And so, the Hudson's Bay Company was born.

The community of Waskaganish has been marking the event with a year-long series of events in and around the town.

**One theory says** that the English sailor and explorer Henry Hudson wintered near Waskaganish in 1610



*And so, the  
Hudson's Bay  
Company was born.*





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between the two communities near the spot where the people from Nemaska settled for a brief period

The winter celebration saw a toboggan/snowshoe journey from Siisiitsiinuuk in Rupert Bay to Waskaganish. Artisans from around the territory were invited to display their creations.

Performers from the south were also in Waskaganish. Canadian group Blue Rodeo played to a packed arena. John Cafferty and the Beaver Brown Band played in May. As well, the Innu band Kashtin played Waskaganish, as well as Kashkun.

The final event will be held in November when Gospel singer Jason Crabb is expected to visit.

One event of historical note was shared by the communities of Waskaganish and Nemaska. In the early 1970s, many people in Waskaganish weren't very welcoming when the Nemaska people were relocated, after being warned that their village would be flooded. They were placed in the least livable parts of the then-very tiny village of Rupert House. A reconciliation ceremony was held between the two communities near the spot where the people from Nemaska settled for a brief period.



Artisans from around the territory were invited to **display their creations**





# THE BIG SHOW!

by Amy German | Photos by Ian Diamond

**W**hether you call it a guilty pleasure or the coolest thing you've ever seen on TV – Cree love wrestling. So for Waskaganish's 350th establishment celebration, it was time for a mega rumble July 16 and 17 at the Rupert River Sports Complex.

According to Charles Hester, the Waskaganish Director of Recreation, Culture, Sports and Leisure, the event was a "big deal." While there are sports camps for hockey, basketball, softball and broomball, some of the "fellas" really like wrestling because they also like to be performers.

Waskaganish resident Henry Wischee aka "Big Bear" works with the Canadian Wrestling Federation (CWF) and is a huge favourite among the local children, Hester said. It's gotten to the point that the kids get upset when they can't buy his figurine when shopping for wrestling toys at Walmart.

They sincerely ask store employees why they can't buy Big Bear dolls.

Hester said that having wrestling legend Tatanka attend the event was quite the coup. He was the biggest name they had ever had up in the Cree Nation and his visit took a whole year to organize. As an add-on to the event, Eeyou Istchee's own North Stars performed.

Tatanka, however, only fought wrestlers who were part of the CWF because they had to be under contract to take part in the actual wrestling.

"Wrestling is quite well known for being half actual wrestling and half drama," Hester said. "Once some kids figure out that it is indeed a charade they lose interest, but others stay tuned. It keeps them hooked because it's a show and it's just good clean fun."

Hester said that throughout the Cree Nation, there are many Cree who travel to Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto to attend WWE events.

"The CWF has been coming here for years and everybody follows the story lines," said Hester. "Everybody knows who the good guys are and who the bad guys are and we throw a few locals into the story lines and it makes it more interesting."

The event was carried out just like any other royal rumble, the entire first day was all about calling people out and building up drama. Because the locals participated in that, there was even some wrestling drama in Cree. There was lots of tension and anticipation for who was going to fight for the belt and win, explained Hester.

"The kids really loved it. They knew what was going on and their reactions were fantastic," Hester exclaimed. "When someone would get body slammed they would go crazy! They were screaming their heads off!"

**First Nations wrestling star** highlights ring action for Waskaganish anniversary

*Everybody knows who the good guys are and who the bad guys are and we **throw** a few locals into the story lines and it makes it more interesting*

– Waskaganish Director of Recreation, Charles Hester







by Nahka Bertrand | Photos by Sherry Brunet

# ECHOES OF THE DRUM

Sweltering heat couldn't stop  
**Kahnawake's 2018 Pow Wow**

**D**espite the scorching heat and dry conditions, throngs of people flocked to Kahnawake over the July 14-15 weekend for the 28th annual "Echoes of a Proud Nation" Pow Wow. More than 8300 visitors, dancers, and vendors from across Turtle Island crowded the Pow Wow grounds.

Indigenous dancers in colourful regalia moved to the beat of the host drum. Whitetail Cree and Buffalo Hat Singers took turns drumming and singing in between master of ceremonies Kirby Mianscum's often-humorous comments.

Lynne Norton, one of the 10 organizers on the Pow Wow Committee, spoke with the Nation about her role and how to create such a large gathering.

"All of the people who work here, the security, and those at the gates are volunteers," Norton explained. "This year we're a little short on staff but it always seems to work out."

She has been volunteering for 18 years, and said that since the same people often continue to collaborate in creating this seamless event, they get to know one another very well. This year the Pow Wow Committee said goodbye to two of their own. Lee Martin passed away in July 2017; while Joyce Canadian passed July 3, just two weeks before the Pow Wow.

Norton spoke about how it all started back in 1991.

"The logo for Echoes of a Proud Nation states 'Renewing our spirit through the power of the drum', because it was 1991 and we were all recovering from the Oka Crisis," she recounted. "We wanted to reach out to other communities, and we were asking ourselves, 'How can we show them that we're not crazy?' Five or six people were sitting around a table, and this is what they came up with. It seems to work!"



*“It took us nine hours to get here, we only got stuck in traffic twice.*

*That’s travelling!*

*Sometimes getting stuck in traffic is the best time, because you get to know all your neighbours. And if your car breaks down, well you just have to dance!”*

*- Cheryl Bomberry*

Norton also explained that the costs of putting on the “Echoes of a Proud Nation” Pow Wow hovers at \$140,000. Gate revenues, along with subsidies from financial institutions, cover the budget.

“We have to truck everything in,” Norton noted. “There’s usually nothing here, no water, electricity, generators, lights or stadiums, and that costs a lot.”

The committee starts signing on staff and drummers for next year immediately after the Pow Wow ends. There’s a standstill of activity until about January, when they open up the waiting list for the vendors and food stalls. Usually vendors and the people who operate food stalls are Indigenous, and their wares are authentic. They

also tend to come back every year. This year there were 93 vendors and 30 food stalls.

“It took us nine hours to get here,” Cheryl Bomberry said with a slight smile as she stood over her sizzling frybread with tongs in her hand. “We only got stuck in traffic twice. That’s travelling! Sometimes getting stuck in traffic is the best time, because you get to know all your neighbours. And if your car breaks down, well you just have to dance!”

Bomberry was one of the 30 food stall vendors at this year’s Pow Wow. Her food stall “Navajo Tacos” is legendary and is currently in its 39th year of operation. She hails from Six Nations and brought her family with her, along with a

trailer filled with food and supplies. Her 15-year-old daughter Kareesa has grown up on the Pow Wow trail and knows the ins and out of the business, and can make the various dishes from scratch.

“It’s really hard to stand here and cook for 10-12 hours a day. We have a good spot under the tree and access to supplies, but really, it’s that drum that keeps us going,” Bomberry said with a laugh.

The sweltering heat was the main topic of conversation as it was a blazing 35 degrees under the noon sun and it hadn’t rained in two weeks.

Isanielle Enright, of mixed Mohawk, French and Irish decent, is a beader with a craft and jewellery stall. She said the best remedy for the heat, along with some shade, was the strawberry

juice at the Red Cart Stall run by Dave Fazio. Enright shared a stall at the Pow Wow with Kateri Aubin Dubois, who also beads. The young women team up because it makes sense to share the costs of renting the stall that allows them to sell their products.

“It helps to buy textbooks,” Enright said. “And there’s an understanding of wealth that comes with doing this work, it’s not so much about what you can get, but how much you can give. I like to re-invest in the community, we give workshops, and I also buy pay-forward meals at the Café Roundhouse.”

Café Roundhouse is a seasonal café and restaurant in downtown Cabot Square that offers Indigenous-themed meals. Many homeless Indigenous people congregate in the square because of its proximity to Indigenous resources.

Joywind is a member of the Shushwap Nation in British Columbia, but lives in the Laurentians. She has been operating a stall that sells traditional drums, tanned deerskin, beaver furs, medicines, dream catchers, and jewellery at the Kahnawake Pow Wow for 18 years.

Joywind and her partner have organized their lives around the Pow Wow trail. “During the winters, because there are no Pow Wows we gather the skins,” she explained. “We gather about three truckloads of skins every winter.”

Their biggest business happens during the winter because that’s when they distribute merchandise, such as leather and drums, all over North America. They keep coming back to Pow Wows every summer though, because it is so much fun.





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## Packing a punch

### Imagining alternate realities at Montreal Comiccon 2018

Photos & Story by Julie McIntosh

This year Montreal Comiccon celebrated its 10th year anniversary of hosting fantastic to geeky activities for fans of pop culture. Tens of thousands of comic-nerds, sci-fi fans and collectors buzzed around Montreal's Palais des Congrès July 6-8.

Some lined up for one-on-one time with their favourite stars, artists or authors. Others marveled at the colourful array of toys and collectables on offer.

Val Kilmer, Chuck Norris, Pamela Anderson, Jason Momoa, David Duchovny were the guests of honour, with names like Amanda Tapping, Adrian Paul, Pom Klementieff, and Sonequa Martin-Green attending panels and signings as well.

Attendees could take in about 200 activities and panel discussions on their favourite pop culture topic: Harry Potter, Pokémon central, Steampunk, Star Trek: Discovery universe, and even open-mic Japanese karaoke!

Probably the most exciting to witness was the live-action medieval combat. Men and women from the Patriots, a Quebec City group that specializes in period armour fights and 14th century historical re-enactment, dressed in full-body armour and battled for 45-second periods – which is plenty if you're carrying what feels like a small person on your back.

Raphael Santos, 7, attending with his family from Chateauguay, said that he loves superheroes. His favourite by far was Iron Man: "Because of his armour." His parents said that attending Comiccon encourages him to read.

On the convention floor and along the artist's alley, attendees had the chance to speak with passionate writers and illustrators. Some featured web comics, such as *Ponto*, by Tania Mignacca, were created in Montreal. It's the story of an orange-and-white pylon that decides to move to the big city. A more horror-centered children series, *Song of the Dead*, has its readers follow necromancers and spirits across fantasy kingdoms.

Rebellious teens fighting real demons and monsters are chock-a-plenty in *Shattered Starlight*, a comic by Nicole Chartrand. More metaphorical demons come to light in

*Our War*, by Luke Henderson. For sci-fi lovers, *Homeward*, by Francis McNamee and Laurence Sea Dionne, is a galactic adventure comic for youth.

For young adults, the hottest books on the convention floor spanned gaming to sci-fi fantasy. *The Violet Fox* series and the *Sparkstone* saga by Clare C. Marshall; *The Gamer* series by Pierre-Yves Villeneuve; and horror novels *L'assaut du Mal* by Sylvain Bouffard, have grown in popularity.

Sloane, 6, came to Comiccon with her mother, Lindsay Visitor, from Wemindji. There's no bad age to start loving horror for Sloane, who was hoping to see Pennywise, Jason or Freddy Krueger over the weekend.

Sloane found her way into her mother's comic and movie collection at a young age and has loved animation ever since: "My favourite comic is Kiss!"

A love for pop culture is strong in her family, as this was Lindsay's fifth year attending

Comiccon. "Always VIP!" she laughed. She would borrow comics from her uncle or read Archie Comics, since there weren't many places to buy comics in Wemindji.

As for cosplayers, fans decked out in their best costume showcased their best and most ingenious outfits throughout the weekend.

The popular masquerade ball hosted over 100 talented cosplayers, who walked the runway in front of judges to compete in various categories.

Best in show was cosplayer Peekaboo with "Glitter Jessica Rabbit". Her advice for those interested in cosplaying is to just have fun: "To me it means you're investing your own time and your own money, and it's your body wearing it and you should feel comfortable and enjoy it as much as you possibly can."



## The popular masquerade ball hosted over 100 talented cosplayers







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MAP \_\_\_\_\_  
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Send to: CMEB 21 Hilltop, P.O. 150, Wemindji, QC, Canada JOM 1L0 Tel: 819-978-0264 ext. 327 Fax: 819-978-3834 E-mail: youcefharbi@cree.net



## Campaign season

by Errol Mianscum

**W**e've seen a lot of campaigning over the past year, a year that was kicked off by the elections of our new Grand Chief and Deputy Grand Chief, Abel Bosum and Mandy Gull, respectively. This, of course, was an exciting moment for all of the Cree Nation. Shortly after, we saw Wemindji elect Christina Gilpin as their Chief.

In the past couple weeks, we've seen Thomas Neeposh elected as Chief of Mistissini, along with Gerald Longchap returning for a second term as Deputy Chief. Then, we saw voters elect a new chairperson of the Cree School Board, Sarah Pash, who will take over the reigns from outgoing two-term chair Kathleen Wootton. In August, we will learn of Waswanipi's elections for Chief as well. This, I would say is just a taster for what is coming in 2019.

In 2019, we will see Chisasibi, Waskaganish, Eastmain, Nemaska, Oujé-Bougoumou and Washaw Sibi hold their elections! This is like watching six UFC championship fights in one night! I think I will start a printing company before all these campaigns begin! Either that or offer my services as a campaign manager, but that's a risky one. There's always that one politician

Right now, we're just the ones who have make sure **we continue going in the direction we need to**

with those skeletons in their closet that could make your career as a campaign manager a short one. So, I think I'll stick to printing their posters, pins, stickers and brochures.

It was very nice to see another woman take on a high-ranking role in our Nation. Two of our entities, the Cree School Board and Cree Health Board, both have women leading them. I wouldn't want to be Abel right now if I had to meet with both Board Chairs at the same time. All kidding aside, the equality in seeing both males and females take on leadership roles is quite refreshing to see.

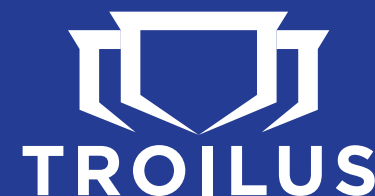
I remember the time when Violet Pachanos was the first-ever female Chief in our Cree communities AND followed that up 10 years later by becoming the first female Deputy Grand Chief. She is a true trailblazer for all of our future female Cree leaders.

I'm sure she met a lot of resistance from her male counterparts back then. Today though, I believe we've become a nation that has surpassed the ideology of "gender barriers" and realized that we are Cree first and foremost before even looking at the gender of the can-

didates. The gender card is old and should be tossed aside. Today, we can all vote with the knowledge and clear conscience that we've made our decision based on experience, education and the candidate's love of our people and culture.

The excitement that the elections bring in any political office sometimes takes a front seat in the social media pages. Most times we'll see respectful posts without any backlash from opposition supporters. But sometimes we will see the occasional negative replies that kill the excitement of who will lead us into the next decade.

I'm no expert, but seeing this brings a sour note to our Cree nation. This isn't who we are. I believe before any elections that we should be reminded of where we come from by the people who took us to where we are now, our elders, who are pointing out to our children and reminding us who matters the most. Right now, we're just the ones who make sure we continue going in the direction we need to go that will ensure the perseverance of our way of life.



Troilus Gold would like to congratulate Mr. Thomas Neeposh as the newly elected Chief of Mistissini, Mr. Gerald Longchap on his re-election as Deputy Chief and all the elected Council Members.

The Troilus team looks forward to continuing its relationship with the Cree Nation of Mistissini.

Justin Reid, CEO of Troilus Gold







# Tea AND Bannock The legacy of Skoden

by Maitée Labrecque-Saganash



For millennials like myself, meme culture is a big part of our social interactions online. Over the years, it has become the most common form of humour on social media and became so viral that some universities like Cambridge are now offering short courses on memes. Memes take many forms but the typical format is a relatable sentence accompanied by an image spread quickly by Internet users.

Before Facebook, early forms of memes like funny pictures were shared through (quite annoying) email chains, discussion forums and MSN, for instance. Many experts debate the first Internet meme. My online researches lead me to believe that Godwin's Law (1990) and Baby Cha-Cha-Cha (1996) were the first ones. Thankfully, memes have evolved since then.

At some point, minorities in North America started making memes for their own community. From that movement emerged Skoden. Skoden is a Native slang word for "let's go then", usually said before a fight. "Stoodis (let's do this)" and "Kayden (okay then)" are related slang words.

The original Skoden meme featured a picture of a homeless man with his fist drawn. We knew him only as Skoden. Just like many other homeless Indigenous folks in this country, he got his picture taken probably without his

informed consent and got stripped of his identity. This man died in a shelter in Lethbridge, Alberta in 2015. His name was Pernell Bad Arm, a generous and kind person according to his family.

But something happened in Sudbury, Ontario a few weeks ago. One morning, everyone woke up to a "Skoden" graffiti splashed across the water tower, which confused the non-Natives. At this point, something shifted in Indigenous meme culture. People started to ditch Bad Arm's picture as more people found out about his story. Even though police consider it an act of vandalism, the Sudbury water tower graffiti allowed Bad Arm to reclaim his dignity in the spirit world.

Laughing is one of the strongest medicines. Evelyn St-Onge once told me that, "If the Innu stopped laughing, we would have died."

Humour has always been a coping mechanism for Indigenous folks, including me. I often laugh at my own hardships and traumas. It's soothing.

For some of us, Indigenous meme culture is an easy way to keep the conversation going about politics, ceremonies, colonization and culture. Coping with the burden of colonization and depression is exactly what got Arnell Tailfeathers, a Blackfoot-Cree from Kainai First Nation and an influential meme maker, into memes.

"I also try to communicate political messages through memes, and maybe influence certain people in positions of power," Tailfeathers said. "The message is mostly implied, maybe subliminal. For the most part it's observations. But I can only hope to add to the conversation. Specifically, I hope to add a Blackfoot perspective into the Indigenous networks. A fine arts degree in digital media also helps."

Kyran Auger, a Cree from Loon River First Nation in northern Alberta, said he is impressed by Tailfeathers although he says his memes are not as political. "When I bring in my memes, I like to think I have them all prepared in a nice bundle, lay them out in front of the other meme creators and openly display the teachings that come with my meme," he explained. Auger likes to get his templates from familiar references, like Tipi Tales or Ernest Monias.

Like Tailfeathers and Auger, I believe it's important to have an internet experience that resembles Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island – especially on Facebook where hate speech towards us is largely accepted – and to reshape pop culture in our way. I also believe memes are a way for us to bond through something other than trauma.

As Auger would say, "All are welcome in the meme lodge."

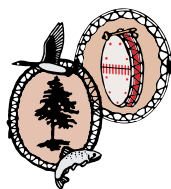


## Congratulations Donald Wayne Nicholls

The Cree Construction and Development Company is proud to congratulate Donald Wayne Nicholls on receiving the Meritorious Service Medal (Civil Division) from the Canadian Governor General Julie Payette

*Director of Justice and Corrections with the Cree Nation Government, Donald Nicholls, M.S.M. has led the development of innovative crime prevention, alternative dispute resolution and reintegration programs for members of nine Cree communities in northern Quebec. Rooted in Indigenous culture, his programs include building justice centres, school-based youth workshops, women's shelters and more.*





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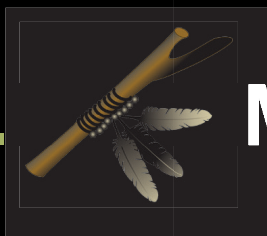
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